



INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 15 December 2005

Title: DIRECTION OF TRAVEL REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive

Report reference: CE 31/05

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to raise Members' awareness of the Direction of Travel Report that the Audit Commission produced last year and to report to Members the progress on an Improvement Plan for the Council.

Recommendations:

1. That Members of the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider the questions for the Committee in this report and make any other comments or suggestions that they feel appropriate.

Contact Officer: Jason Gooding

Ext: 7470

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

Introduction and Background

1. In Autumn 2004 the Audit Commission conducted a “light touch” review of the Council in order to form an opinion on the Council’s Direction of Travel. This was formally reported in the Annual Audit letter. The Audit Commission additionally supplied the Council with an informal report on Direction of Travel early in 2005. The Direction of Travel report is attached here as Appendix 1 for Members’ information.
2. Corporate Management Team considered the Direction of Travel report in February 2005 and discussed the need for an Action Plan to monitor the progress of appropriate resulting actions. At that time flood recovery was an extremely high priority and it was not possible to allocate resources to all of the resulting priorities.
3. Subsequently the Code of Corporate Governance and Value for Money self-assessments have generated a number of other actions for management. It was therefore considered useful to develop an overall Improvement Plan, the first draft of which is Appendix 2.
4. The Improvement Plan addresses only those issues rising from the Direction of Travel Report and other drivers where there is substantial work still to do at a strategic level. These are all of a high enough priority to be included within the Improvement Plan, but each has been scored with a relative risk (in terms of impact) and priority. Each action has also been allocated to one of the new Directorates and a lead Overview & Scrutiny Committee for monitoring implementation is suggested.
5. The deadlines for implementation are not yet in the Improvement Plan. This is because the new Senior Management Team has only very recently been appointed and is due in the next few weeks to consider the Improvement Plan and how it will be delivered as part of the new Directorates’ Service Plans.
6. Having considered the Direction of Travel Report and the draft Improvement Plan the Committee is asked to consider the following questions:
 - Does the Improvement Plan address the relevant outstanding Corporate issues?
 - Do the priorities and risk assessments allocated to each of the actions seem appropriate?
 - Are the correct Overview & Scrutiny Committees assigned to monitoring progress with each of the actions?

- Would the Committee prefer to monitor the Improvement Plan separately or as part of the arrangements for monitoring the new Directorates' Services Plans?
 - Does the Committee have any views that the new Senior Management Team should consider when determining the deadlines?
7. The answers to these questions from each of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees will assist the Senior Management Team in refining and delivering the Improvement Plan and will form the basis of a report to the Executive in December 2005.



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2005

Title: DIRECTION OF TRAVEL REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive

Report reference: CE 31/05

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to raise Members' awareness of the Direction of Travel Report that the Audit Commission produced last year and to report to Members the progress on an Improvement Plan for the Council.

Recommendations:

1. That Members of the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider the questions for the Committee in this report and make any other comments or suggestions that they feel appropriate.

Contact Officer: Jason Gooding

Ext: 7470

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

Introduction and Background

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Direction of Travel - Progress report

Carlisle City Council

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Introduction

1. In October 2003 a Comprehensive Performance Assessment was published by the Audit Commission about the council which categorised it as good.
2. This report presents an analysis of the council's progress to date. The review is intended to serve the following purposes:
 - ◆ assess to what extent your council's planning and delivery is effectively driving, shaping and resulting in improvement in priority areas;
 - ◆ identify your council's achievements, progress and direction of travel in delivering its improvement priorities;
 - ◆ provide independent feedback to you on your progress to date and future plans; and
 - ◆ inform planning for the 2005-6 audit and inspection programme.

What is the council trying to achieve – what are the priorities for improvement?

3. The City Vision (the community strategy) sets out long term aims for the locality, based on extensive consultation and partner engagement. The council continues to work with the City Vision partnership to refresh this strategy. A joint local strategic partnership (LSP) has been developed, with Eden District Council, establishing community priorities across the whole of the LSP area for the two districts.
4. A revised corporate plan was published in June 2004, which demonstrated improved clarity on the council's priorities. Four corporate aims were identified as having the highest priority.
5. A number of key policies and strategies have been developed in priority service areas and in support of a wider community leadership role:
 - ◆ Aims for a 'Learning City' have been established with partners as part of developing a sustainable sub-regional centre and associated economic development;
 - ◆ Housing policies developed with partners - homelessness and supporting people (county wide), empty homes (jointly with Eden DC).
6. There are areas where the council's plans to deliver against its aims, objectives and priorities need to be further developed or clarified:
 - ◆ The joint LSP has made limited progress since last year and its role in developing policy objectives and priorities is unclear with regard to both of the district areas. The interaction between the City Vision and the

LSP objectives is unclear in terms of how key policy decisions will be directed and what outcomes are being targeted. The areas where potential benefits of strategic planning for the larger area may be secured have yet to be explicitly agreed;

- ◆ The establishment of sub-regional approaches, where this would improve policies and investment approaches, has been slow to develop, for example housing markets and waste management. Although recent work in these priority areas appears promising, improvement opportunities are not consistently reviewed with partners;
- ◆ The council values of 'putting customers first' and 'equality' have not yet been translated into clear service standards.

What are the improvements achieved to date and what do future plans address?

7. Improvement has been secured in a number of areas during the last year:

- ◆ Local partnership working continues to develop strongly and there has been good feedback from partners on their interactions with the council. Partnership policy development is in progress, and is due for completion in January 2005, evaluating the effectiveness of partnerships in delivering corporate aims;
- ◆ National recognition awards and significantly increased resident satisfaction have been achieved for the city's parks and open spaces;
- ◆ The planning service has sharply increased its speed of processing planning applications;
- ◆ There is clear awareness of the importance of crime issues in resident perceptions of quality of life, resulting in a high priority and improved focus of activity in crime and disorder issues and recognition in council policy areas;
- ◆ The customer contact centre, to improve service delivery and accessibility for certain services, is now operational;
- ◆ Joint working with Eden District Council and other Cumbrian authorities on issues such as recycling, parking enforcement, licensing changes and ICT procurement has also increased effectiveness and capacity to respond to change requirements;
- ◆ Significant investment in development programmes for managers and councillors, including the Achieving Cumbrian Excellence capacity building programme, is helping to improve leadership competencies within the organisation. A successful liP re-assessment took place during the year and a people strategy, that addresses both staff and councillors, has been approved. The member learning and development framework is targeted at achieving NW Member charter status in 2005;
- ◆ Recycling and composting rates have improved, although original government targets were not achieved.

8 Key challenges and areas of continuing development face the council to meet the rate of change for local government, it has recognised the following key issues:

- ◆ Improving the ability to assess achievement against corporate objectives. Target setting approaches within services lack clarity on the service standards to be achieved and how rates of improvement may impact on the achievement of corporate aims. Business plan processes are still being improved to reflect revised priorities through SMART objectives and measures;
- ◆ A significant proportion of BVPIs show deterioration in 2003/4. There is a lack of clear analysis of how the profile of service improvement / deterioration relates to council priorities. Qualitative information and resident satisfaction data is not consistently used and interpreted within performance monitoring at the council;
- ◆ Weak performance standards in the speed of benefits processing, which can support high priority aims to tackle deprivation and social exclusion, have been selected as the focus for a best value review;
- ◆ High levels of waste are generated within the district and the council does not yet have effective plans to address waste minimisation and sustainable waste management arrangements within the county;
- ◆ The general trend within Cumbria of increased incidences of recorded violent crime and disorder is shown within the district;
- ◆ Further development of a pay and workforce strategy that addresses the appropriateness of current pay structures regarding equality, development, recruitment and retention;
- ◆ To explore the potential of integrated workforce planning across key local partners to maximise capacity within the sub region and improve cost-effectiveness
- ◆ The development of a comprehensive procurement approach (linked to workforce plan outputs above) that will maximise purchasing power and address capacity restrictions through the best use of joint working and partnership arrangements;
- ◆ Staff sickness absence levels remain comparatively high;
- ◆ Ensuring the effective utilisation of the Connected Cumbria partnership and its associated projects, particularly the Information Hub, to deliver improved and accessible services that meet community needs;
- ◆ Corporate governance and risk management arrangements require updating to good practice standards, including the transparency of financial reporting and a sound 'quality assurance' approach in responding to identified process weaknesses;
- ◆ Medium term financial planning is developing. Priority assessments support decision making on additional resource bids. This approach

needs to be extended to all base budgets to meet the future efficiency challenges facing local government.

- 9 Following completion of this review we will discuss with you your improvement plans as amended through your own analysis of changes, progress and planned improvement activity, in order to develop a relevant audit and inspection programme for 2005-6.

Improvement Plan Version 2.0 as at 2nd November 2005 (JG)

Ref	Action	Priority	Risk	Owner	Deadline	O&S Committee	Notes
1	Establishment of the Carlisle Local Strategic Partnership and a Community Plan	H	H	DEV		Community	Critical dependency Community plan mu Carlisle Renaissance
2	Establishment and delivery of a clear Equality & Diversity Policy and Strategy	M	H	PPP		Community	Simple clear directio need to influence all
3	Establishment of the Performance Management Framework	H	M	PPP	31-Jan-06	Corporate resources	Move to minthly rep the main challenge.
4	Improved internal communications	L	M	PPP		Corporate resources	Critical for corporate improvement.
5	Improved financial performance management	M	M	CSERV		Corporate resources	Very high priority an financial pressures).
6	Delivery of the Corporate Governance Action Plan	H	M	CSERV		Corporate resources	See action plan.
7	Assess base budget against priorities	M	L	CSERV		Corporate resources	Major medium term 'programme in' effec of years.
8	Improve management of externalised services	M	L	LDS		Corporate resources	Crucial that one dire on standards for ma services.
9	Provide socio-economic data, demographic data and research to support decision making	L	M	PPP		Corporate resources	Research capacity tc stage 2 reorganisati
10	Deliver the Overview & Scrutiny Action Plan	M	M	PPP		Management	See action plan.
11	Deliver a strategy for the training and development of members	L	M	PPP		Corporate resources	Much of the way the focussed on equipin priorities.

12	Reduce sickness absence	M	M	CEX		Corporate resources	Substantial financial
13	Establish and deliver the Pay and Workforce Strategy including the Workforce Development Plan	H	H	PPP		Corporate resources	PRINCE2 project suit
14	Improve arrangements for procurement and shared services including more effective use of Connected Cumbria	L	M	COMM		Corporate resources	Links to NWIN (ACE) initiatives. Needs dr: place.
15	Establish and deliver a strategy for waste minimisation	M	H	COMM		Infrastructure	Very clear operation needs more focus or volume.
16	Improve the performance of the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership	L	M	DEV		Community	Need better member with community stra work.